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SHEAFFER JEANNE M
78 MONTEVIDEO 1762

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-31 EUR-12 ISO-00 HA-05 IO-13 TRSE-20 CIAP-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 /098 W

-----014403 310131Z /70

EXCISE

R 301613Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6537
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
AMEMBASSY VIENNA
AMEMBASSY PERN

C O N F I D E N T I A L MONTEVIDEO 1762

E.O. 11652; 3DS

TAGS: SHUM, UY

SUBJ: RECENT BELGIAN HUMAN RIGHTS VISIT

REF: (A) 77 MONTEVIDEO 5866 (B) ROME 9113 (NOTAL) (C) MONTEVIDEO 1763

1. ON 18 MAY A GROUP OF THREE PROMINENT BELGIANS COMPLETED A TWO-DAY HUMAN RIGHTS VISIT TO URUGUAY. THE MISSION, WHICH INCLUDED EX-MINISTER OF JUSTICE VERMEYLEN, SENATOR RICKMANS AND RADIO-TELEVISION COMMENTATOR, S. HAUTFENNE, WERE TRAVELLING UNDER JOINT SPONSORSHIP OF THE BELGIAN HUMAN RIGHTS LEAGUE AND ANOTHER BELGIAN GROUP, THE COMMITTEE TO AID MIGUEL ANGEL ESTRELLA. THE LATTER IS A RENOWNED ARGENTINE PIANIST IMPRISONED IN URUGUAY SINCE LAST DECEMBER FOR HIS INVOLVEMENT WITH MEMBERS OF THE ARGENTINE MONTONERO SUBVERSIVE MOVEMENT (REF ()).

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2. THE GROUP'S EFFORTS TO MEET WITH HIGH-LEVEL GOV OFFICIALS WERE COMPLETELY UNSUCCESSFUL DUE BOTH TO THE SHORTNESS OF THEIR VISIT (WHICH BRACKETED A LOCAL HOLIDAY) AND THE LACK OF PRE-ARRIVAL PROGRAMMING AND COORDINATION WITH THE GOV. THEY WERE ALSO UNSUCCESSFUL IN THEIR ATTEMPTS TO VISIT ESTRELLA. THE BELGIANS DID MANAGE TO MEET WITH SEVERAL LEADERS OF URUGUAY'S QUOTE RECESSED UNQUOTE POLITICAL PARTIES. THERE WERE ALSO BRIEFED ON USG HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY BY DCM AND EMBASSY HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICER.

3. COMMENT: THIS IS THE SECOND GROUP WHICH HAS JOURNEYED FROM EUROPE IN RECENT WEEKS. THE OTHER, AN ITALIAN TRADE UNION DELEGATION, ALSO FAILED TO MAKE MEANINGFUL GOV CONTACTS ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION. THE ITALIANS RETURNED HOME TO MAKE PUBLIC STATEMENTS (REF B) DENOUNCING THE LEVEL OF OPPRESSION IN URUGUAY. THE BELGIAN

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GROUP WILL LIKELY DO THE SAME.

PAST EXPERIENCE SUGGESTS THAT IT
WILL ONLY HAVE THE PERVERSE EFFECT OF STRENGTHENING THE
GOV'S MORE REACTIONARY ELEMENTS. BOTH VISITS HAD THE
POTENTIAL FOR A USEFUL POSITIVE IMPACT. UNFORTUNATELY,
THIS WAS LOST IN BOTH CASES THROUGH A LACK OF ADVANCE
GROUNDWORK. WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO MAKE THIS POINT TO OUR
LOCAL DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES FROM WESTERN EUROPEAN
MISSIONS (REF C).

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